

ZULULAND BLACK RHINO STUDY

The Natal Parks Board, with the financial assistance of the Endangered Wildlife Trust, has commenced a study on the size and structure of the Black Rhinoceros population in the Hluhluwe/Umfolozi complex. The study has been undertaken by Peter Hitchins, former Natal Parks Board ranger and an international authority on the Black Rhino.

The population size of Black Rhinos in the Hluhluwe/Umfolozi complex was estimated to be 328 in 1972. Since then, population trends have been determined using age structure of the population's known mortalities and removals. In 1980, the Endangered Wildlife Trust funded a helicopter census which sampled the composition of approximately 37% of the population. The results indicated that the recruitment rate was very low, with only 20% of adult females with calves under two years old compared with 89% in the re-established population in the Kruger National Park.

At this time it was considered that the population was at ecological carrying capacity and should be reduced (i) to improve the age structure of the population and hence avoid a possible population crash, and (ii) to provide an increased number of rhino for translocation. This was effected by a capital reduction of 32 in 1981, and

was followed by an annual removal of 13 animals to keep the population size stable.

In view of these large removals and the length of time since the last comprehensive survey and effective estimate (1972), an updated population estimate is urgently required. This will be used to determine future off-takes, and hence the availability of Black Rhino for other conservation areas within South Africa.

The future of the Black Rhino in much of the rest of Africa, with the exception of South West Africa and Zimbabwe, is bleak because of the illegal trade in rhino horn which continues with North Yemen (the world's biggest market for this illegal item) — despite a two year old ban by the Yemen Government. The actual amount of rhino horn imported into North Yemen has in fact decreased because of the overall decline in rhino horn on the world market.

Poaching and habitat loss have severely depleted rhino populations from an estimated 65 000 in 1970 to 10 000 today. Clearly the Black Rhino is sliding to extinction in the wild, and for this reason the Endangered Wildlife Trust feels it is of vital importance to assist the Natal Parks Board in this study, for Africa's Black Rhino may very well depend on these efforts for their future survival.

On February 25th 1985, a farewell party was held for Clive Walker by the staff and trustees of the Endangered Wildlife Trust, following his resignation as Director.

Chairman of the Trust, Mr Angus Morrison presented Clive with one of only 200 castings of Mafunyane by Jackie Nooks — a small token of appreciation for his services to both the Trust and the conservation of southern African endangered species.



From left: Clive Walker, Angus Morrison and John Ledger.

Photo: Petra Mengel



DESERT RHINO POSTER WILL HELP CONSERVE WILDLIFE OF KAOKOLAND AND DAMARALAND

The Endangered Wildlife Trust has produced a limited number of posters on the black rhinos of Kaokoland and Damaraland, SWANMIBIA.

Less than 50 of these desert adapted creatures survive in the harsh environment of the Kaokoland. Over the last two years however, due to determined conservation efforts by various organisations, not a single animal has been poached.

The black rhino is dying at the hands of man and this particular sub-species, *Diceros bicornis bicornis*, of which another 300 are found in Etosha, is priceless.

The Endangered Wildlife Trust recently handed over the responsibility of anti-poaching and surveillance work in Damaraland, to the Directorate of Nature Conservation, South West Africa. The Directorate has assured the Trust that it is able to take over all work previously carried out by Mr Gart Owen-Smith who headed up the Trust's Desert Project.

The role played by the six black auxiliary field staff has proved of immense value and has contributed to the success the Directorate has had in combatting poaching. Funding of the auxiliary staff will continue to be provided by the Endangered Wildlife Trust.

These limited edition posters may be obtained by way of a R1 donation to:

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